

Implementing airport security type screenings for Washington State ferries would be devastating to the Puget Sound area economy. Washington State ferries carry over 20 million riders a year, and most of these riders are commuters. Many spend two hours traveling each way to work or school, and it's hard enough already to keep the boats on schedule without adding in the unpredictable variable of security screening. In addition, there are over 26,000 vehicles a day using the ferries, and no way to thoroughly search all of them for all possible weapons. Even without considering the enormous direct cost of such an undertaking, the effect on our island and peninsula economies would be staggering.

After the high profile airliner/World Trade Center attacks it's hard to imagine a more unlikely and mundane target than a ferry. It's easy to sit around and dream up what could conceivably happen, but a ferry just doesn't carry anywhere near the same destructive potential or symbolism that other possible targets have. The current airline industry woes are often portrayed as being due to a fear of terrorists, yet I don't know ANYONE who avoids flying for this reason. However, I do know many (myself included) who dread getting anywhere near airports due to the huge lines, delays, and ridiculous searches.

Posting security people on the boats and training the crews in how to respond in an emergency is reasonable, but use some common sense and don't publicize exactly what you do or plan to do. When (as happened earlier) it's announced that every 17th vehicle is going to be searched, you've thrown away any chance of catching all but the dumbest criminal.

Shortly after 9/11 our leaders claimed that the attack was because "they resent our freedom." If the conflict has anything to do with freedom, then the terrorists don't have to do anything but sit back and watch as we self-destruct in our paranoia.